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OF DETROIT ROTC CHIEF

Cloak-and-Dagger War Hero Retires to Study for Ph. D.

By WILLIAM W. LUTZ

The name of Col. James E. Kellis runs like a thread through a number of books recounting harrowing behind-the-lines activities of agents of the Office of Strategic Services (OSS) during World War II.

It also occurs in records of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) which succeeded the OSS in 1947. It is found in reports of operations during the Korean War and the cold war with Russia.

Col. Kellis, who in the last four years has been commandant of the ROTC unit at the University of Detroit, has announced he is retiring, to complete work on a doctorate in political science.

HISTORY TO CHILDREN

With the 15th anniversary of the ending of the war in Europe yesterday, the colonel had ample reason to recall a war that his own children look upon as "ancient history."

An immigrant from Greece at 16, he was rejected after an appointment to West Point when it was discovered he wasn't a citizen. Enlisting in the Army Air Corps, he became a lieutenant colonel at 28 and is now retiring at 43 — with 24 years of service.

Fifteen years ago as the war with Germany ended, he was ordered to the Pacific to harass the Japanese in occupied China.

SABOTEUR IN GREECE

Behind him were two years as liaison officer with resistance groups in the Balkans — blowing up bridges and railroads and otherwise hampering Nazi troop movements.

A pilot who volunteered for behind-the-lines sabotage in Greece because he knew the country and the language, Kellis came close to death in 1943 when the Nazis surrounded a town in which he and the OSS "Chicago Mission" were hiding.

Trying to escape to a mountain headquarters, he was backed to the edge of a

cliff. With Nazis closing in, bayonets flashing, Kellis leaped and landed in a treetop which cushioned him from death.

SURVIVES GRENADES

His leap was followed by a hail of hand grenades, tossed by pursuers in a final gesture of contempt. When the explosions subsided, Kellis — cut, bruised, wounded by shrapnel — made his way safely to the guerilla garrison.

When he went to China, the atom bomb had not yet been



COL. JAMES E. KELLIS

unleashed on Japan. He and an OSS mission of 11 men parachuted into the countryside near Peiping, then held by the Japanese.

Chinese puppet police were induced to smuggle the group into the walled city. Dressed in police uniforms, they marched in the center of a

police column, stepping past Japanese sentries while carrying radio equipment and other essentials of espionage hidden in their clothing.

TAKES OVER CITY

Once inside the city, the OSS mission began a steady stream of radio reports on Japanese movements, then took a lead in bolstering a faltering resistance movement.

When word flashed of the first of two A-bomb drops—Hiroshima, Aug. 6, 1945—Kellis walked boldly into the headquarters of the Japanese occupation general. The need for hiding was gone.

"The war is as good as

over," he told the general. "You might as well make it easy on yourself and turn the city over to us."

The general took off his sword and handed it to Kellis. Japan surrendered eight days later on Aug. 14.

After the war, Kellis served as acting chief of operations and overseas mission chief for CIA. From 1953 to 1956, he was a staff officer for the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and director of its atomic and missile school.

Kellis, who lives at 1817 Cass Boulevard, Berkley, is married and has two sons.

Last week one of his sons, noting World War II had been over 15 years, borrowed the Japanese general's sword which Kellis has kept as a souvenir.

In tribute to the 15th anniversary of the war's end, he lugged it to school to show to his history class.